

Miskito Coast Creole

Mískito Coast Creole or **Nicaragua Creole English** is an English-based creole language spoken in coastal Nicaraguan region of Mosquito Coast on the Caribbean Sea; its approximately 30,000 speakers are spread over a number of small villages.^{[3][4]} The region is today administratively separated into two autonomous regions: North Caribbean Coast and South Caribbean Coast. Mosquito is the nickname that is given to the region and earlier residents by early Europeans who visited and settled in the area.^{[5][6]} The term "*Miskito*" is now more commonly used to refer to both the people and the language.^[5]

Miskito creole is nearly identical to, and hence mutually intelligible with, Belizean Creole, and retains a high degree of intelligibility with all other Central American English creoles. It is also sometimes classified as a dialect of Jamaican Patois creole but this classification has been disputed.

It does not have the status of an official language in Nicaragua but it is a recognized language in the autonomous regions where it is spoken.

Miskito Coast Creole	
Native to	Nicaragua
Native speakers	30,000 (2001) ^[1]
Language family	English Creole <ul style="list-style-type: none">Atlantic<ul style="list-style-type: none">Western<ul style="list-style-type: none">Miskito Coast Creole
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	bzk
Glottolog	nica1252 (http://glottolog.org/resource/language/id/nica1252) ^[2]
Linguasphere	52-ABB-af

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Geographic distribution

Speakers of Miskito Coast Creole are primarily persons of African, Amerindian, and European descent in the towns and on the offshore islands of the Miskito Coast. The main concentration of speakers is around Bluefields,^[4] capital of the South Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region, although a majority of inhabitants of the city are now Spanish-speaking immigrants.

Most of the creole speakers are located along the banks of the large rivers and lagoons that surround the area.^[7] Communities are found in Waspán on the Coco River near Cape Gracias a Dios, in Laguna de Perlas, Puerto Cabezas, the offshore Corn Islands, Prinzapolka (Puerto Isabel), and San Juan del Norte (Greytown). Inland, the language is spoken in Siuna, Rosita, and Bonanza on the Prinzapolka River. On the Pacific coast, there are small numbers of speakers in Corinto, Puerto Sandino, and the Nicaraguan capital of Managua. A smaller portion of the population stays in large towns along the northern Caribbean coast of Nicaragua and some also reside in Managua as well as other Central American countries.^[7]

Rama Cay Creole is a variety of the language spoken by the Rama people on Rama Cay, an island in the Bluefields Lagoon.

The environment is that of a tropical rainforest with an average rainfall of 448 centimeters and temperatures that range 26.4 °C (79 °F) and up.^[7]

Geographic distribution of Miskito Coast
Creole in 1987^[8]

Location	Number of speakers
<u>Bluefields</u>	11,258
<u>Corn Islands</u>	3,030
<u>Pearl Lagoon</u>	1,285
<u>Puerto Cabezas</u>	1,733
<i>Other locations</i>	8,417
Total	25,723

History

African slaves were shipwrecked on the Mosquito Coast as early as 1640 and interaction between them and the local Miskito population commenced.

17 century - 19th century

The modern day Creoles' ancestors came as slaves to the Nicaraguan caribbean coast from Africa between the 17th century and the late 18th century.^[9] They were originally brought there by the British to serve them in agriculture and the various labors.^[9] The Coast was officially under British protection from 1740 to 1787 according to the Treaty of Friendship and Alliance with the Miskito Kingdom and remained under British influence until the late 19th century.

Over the period of time while they were here, the African population renewed and transformed their culture and traits by taking elements of their African culture and mixing it with their European masters along with the local Indian tribes which created a new culture.^[7] In the year of 1787, the British were forced to leave the mosquito coast due to a treaty that was put forth.^[9] Slaves who ran away or who were abandoned had made their own African communities at Bluefields.^[9] Many escaped slaves from other islands had also come over to this area to settle down.^[9] Great Britain signed the Treaty of Managua which gave a portion of an area to the natives there and allowed it to be self-governed.^[9] This allowed for the African communities to grow and flourish.^[9] Their culture became solid after gaining economic, political and social control over the Mosquito Coast.^[7] The people in the communities then began to start calling themselves Creoles.^[9]

In the mid-19th century, more English- or Creole-speaking laborers, primarily from Jamaica, were brought to the Coast as laborers. However, following the 1894 formal annexation of the Miskito Kingdom by Nicaragua, an increasing number of Spanish speakers migrated to the area.

20th century - Present day

The 1987 Constitution of Nicaragua granted autonomy to the Zelaya Department as two autonomous regions of the North and South Caribbean Coast. Autonomous status has allowed for the promotion and development of the languages of the Caribbean Coast and, as of 1992, there was an education in English and Spanish, as well as education in indigenous languages.

By the end of the 20th century, the coast was becoming more integrated economically and socially.^[10] The Creole people have now become a minority in the areas which they had previously been predominant in.^[7] Many Creoles now mostly speak Spanish as well as creole and consider themselves to be only Nicaraguan. There are many Creoles who have now intermarried with Mestizos even though many of them still protest on how they lost their political and economic power to them.

Culture and Identification

The Creoles of Nicaragua are said to be an Afro-Caribbean population that are mixed with Europeans, Africans and Amerindians.^[9] Their culture is influenced by West African and British roots along with mestizos and miskito.^[10] Some food that is used in their cooking consists of coconut oil, taro root, manioc and other elements such as wheat flour and other processed foods.^[10] They have their own musical style which can be compared to West Indian calypso.^[9]

Language details

The Nicaraguan Creole English language is spoken as a primary first language by only 35,000 to 50,000 Creoles, Nicaraguan Garifuna, and some Miskitos.^[4] The language is being quickly replaced with Spanish with fewer and fewer people speaking it.^[4] "Creole English is used to an increasing degree in the churches (Decker & Keener 1998) and in bilingual education programs...virtually all reading is done in Spanish" (Bartens 2013:116).

See also

- Belizean Creole
- Jamaican Creole
- Miskito language
- Miskito people
- San Andrés-Providencia Creole

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